
CAUSES OF DEATH IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In 1998 the King County Medical Examiner's Office investigated 121 deaths of persons 19 years old or younger, which represented 8% (121/1507) of the deaths investigated. Of these deaths, 26% (31/121) were of natural manner, 23% (28/121) were accidents, 17% (21/121) were homicides, 26% (31/121) were traffic related, and 7% (9/121) were suicides. There was 1 death of a child/youth classified as undetermined manner.

Of the 31 natural deaths of children and youth investigated by the Medical Examiner, 84% (26/31) were of infants less than one year of age. Of these 26 infants who died of natural causes, 16 were due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

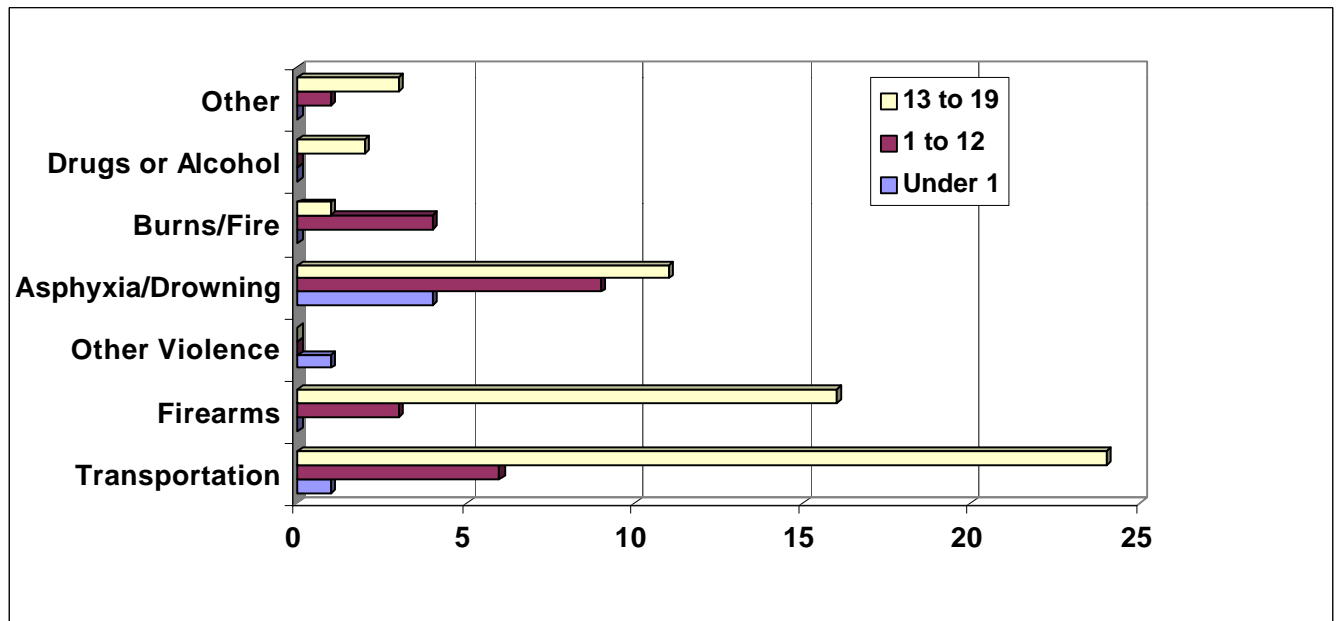
There were 28 children and youth whose deaths were classified as accidental, excluding traffic-related accidents. The circumstances, for these 28 children, were primarily related to drowning (7) and fire/explosion (5).

Of the 21 homicides among children and youth, 14 of the victims were teenagers, 13 through 19 years of age, and 7 were children 12 and under. Sixty-two percent (13) of the children and youth homicide victims died by firearms. One child 1 year of age was the victim of suspected child abuse.

There were 9 youth suicides, between the ages of 15 and 19 years. Males comprised 78% (7/9) of the victims. Regarding the methods used to commit suicide by youth, five (5) were firearms, three (3) by hanging and one (1) by jumping in front of a train.

Thirty-one children and youth 19 years and under died in traffic-related accidents. There were 24 teenagers of whom nine (9) were motor vehicle drivers, eight (8) motor vehicle passengers, two (2) bicyclists, and two (2) pedestrian, one (1) motorcycle driver and two (2) motorcycle passengers. Of the 17 teenagers in the motor vehicles, 41% were seatbelt restrained, and 24% were an unknown restraint due to the nature of the traffic accident. Both bicyclists did not use a helmet. There were seven (7) traffic victims under age 13. Of these, five (5) were motor vehicle passengers, one- (1) pedestrian and one- (1) struck by car while sledding.

The following tables list the causes of death among children and youth for all manners in three age groups: under 1 year, 1-12 years and 13-19 years.

Graph 11-1 Causes of Death in Children and Youth²

² Natural deaths excluded.

Table 11-1 Causes of Death: Children Under 1 Year

CIRCUMSTANCES	MANNER OF DEATH						SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	A	H ³	S	T	U	N		
Miscellaneous	3	1	0	1	3	8		16
<i>Asphyxia</i>	2	1	0	0	1	0	4	
<i>Automobile Passenger</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	
<i>Aspiraton</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
<i>Complications of Therapy</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Congenital Heart Disease</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
<i>Perinatal/Fetal Death</i>	0	0	0	0	0	6	6	
<i>Pedestrian</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Undetermined</i>	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	
<i>Blunt Impact</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Natural disease	0	0	0	0	0	18 ⁴		18
Total	3	1	0	1	3	26		34

³ This perinatal/fetal death was due to suffocation by plastic bag.⁴ 15 of the 18 Natural Deaths were determined Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Table 11-2 Causes of Death: Children 1 to 12 Years

CIRCUMSTANCES	MANNER OF DEATH						SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	A	H	S	T	U	N		
Transportation related	0	0	0	6	0	0		6
<i>Motor vehicle passenger</i>	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	
<i>Pedestrian</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	
<i>Bicyclist</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Struck By Motor Vehicle</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	
Other Violence	0	4	0	0	0	0		4
<i>Homicidal violence</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Gunshot wound</i>	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	
<i>Blunt Impact</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Asphyxia	7	2	0	0	0	0		9
<i>Compression</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	
<i>Mechanical</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Drowning</i>	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	
<i>Undetermined</i>	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	
Miscellaneous	5	0	0	0	0	0		5
<i>Struck By Object</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Fall From height</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Drug Overdose</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Fire/Explosion</i>	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	
<i>Non Traffic -Vehicle</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Complications Of Therapy</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Natural disease	0	0	0	0	0	5		5
Total	12	6	0	6	0	5		29

Table 11-3 Causes of Death: Children 13 to 19 Years

CIRCUMSTANCES	MANNER OF DEATH						SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	A	H	S	T	U	N		
Transportation related	0	0	0	24	0	0		24
<i>Motor vehicle driver</i>	0	0	0	9	0	0	9	
<i>Motor vehicle passenger</i>	0	0	0	8	0	0	8	
<i>Motorcycle driver</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	
<i>Motorcycle passenger</i>	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	
<i>Pedestrian</i>	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	
<i>Bicycle</i>	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	
Physical Trauma	2	12	5	0	1	0		20
<i>Blunt trauma</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Electrocution</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Gunshot wound</i>	0	10	5	0	1	0	16	
<i>Stabbing</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Strangulation</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Struck by object</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Drugs or alcohol exposure	2	0	0	0	0	0		2
Asphyxia	6	2	3	0	0	0		11
<i>Mechanical</i>	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	
<i>Hanging</i>	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	
<i>Drowning</i>	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	
Miscellaneous	3	0	1	0	0	0		4
<i>Fall From Height</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Fire/explosion</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Jumping</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
<i>Anaphylactic Reaction</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Hypothermia</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Non-traffic vehicle</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Natural disease	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Total	13	14	9	24	1	0		61

